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ABSTRACT

The Freeman School, originally called the Red-Brick School House, served the community of Blakely Township, Nebraska from 1872 to 1967. It is representative of the one-room schools that once dotted the western landscape of the United States. The Freeman School served not only as an educational center but also as the church, a meeting hall, the township polling place, and as the social and political center of the community. At present, the National Park Service maintains and preserves this historic structure. This lesson is based on the National Register of Historic Places registration file "Freeman Homestead and Freeman School" and other sources. The lesson can be used in U.S. history, social studies, and geography courses in units on westward expansion and homesteading, the history of education in the United States, early mapping of lands, and studies of U.S. cultural developments. It is divided into: "About This Lesson"; "Getting Started: Inquiry Question"; "Setting the Stage: Historical Context"; "Locating the Site: Maps" (Plat Map of Blakely Township); "Determining the Facts: Readings" (Red Brick School; Community's Experience; Treasurer's Account Book); "Visual Evidence: Images" (Red Brick School; Teacher and Pupils, 1914; Children in Front of School, 1913; Interior of Freeman School; Children at Play); "Putting It All Together: Activities" (And Today in the School; To Preserve or Not to Preserve; How Did My Town Grow?); and "Supplementary Resources." (BT)

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The Freeman School: Building Prairie Communities

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National Register of Historic Places
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The Freeman School: Building Prairie Communities

It seemed, as I recall it, a lonely little house of scholarship...But that humble little school had a dignity of a fixed and far off purpose...It was the outpost of civilization. It was the advance guard of the pioneer, driving the wilderness farther into the west. It was life preparing wistfully for the future.

James Rooney,
in *Journey from Ignorant Ridge*, 1976

(Homestead National Monument of America)

The Freeman School, or the Red-Brick School House as it was originally called, served the community of Blakely Township, Nebraska from 1872 to 1967. It is representative of the oneroom schools that once dotted the landscape of the American West. At the time it closed it had the honor of being the oldest, continuously used oneroom school in the state of Nebraska. The Freeman school served not only as an educational center, but also as the church, a meeting hall, the township polling place, and as the social and political center of the community. At present, the National Park Service maintains and preserves this historic structure that is located within the boundaries of Homestead National Monument of America in southeastern Nebraska.

This lesson is based on the Freeman Homestead and Freeman School, one of the thousands of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Montpelier has also been designated a National Historic Landmark.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About This Lesson

Getting Started: Inquiry Question

Setting the Stage: Historical Context

Locating the Site: Maps

1. Plat map of Blakely Township

Determining the Facts: Readings

1. The Red Brick School
2. The Community's Experience
3. The Treasurer's Account Book

Visual Evidence: Images

1. The Red Brick School
2. Teacher and pupils, 1914
3. Children in front of school, 1913
4. Interior of Freeman School
5. Children at play

Putting It All Together: Activities

1. And Today in the School
2. To Preserve or Not to Preserve
3. How did My Town Grow?

Supplementary Resources

About This Lesson

This lesson is based on the National Register of Historic Places registration file "Freeman Homestead and Freeman School" and other sources. *The Freeman School* was written by Lorna Lange-Daggs, a former Park Ranger at Homestead National Monument of America. Jean West, education consultant, and the Teaching with Historic Places staff edited the lesson. TwHP is sponsored, in part, by the Cultural Resources Training Initiative and Parks as Classrooms programs of the National Park Service. This lesson is one in a series that brings the important stories of historic places into the classrooms across the country.

Where it fits into the curriculum

Topics: The lesson could be used in U.S. history, social studies, and geography courses in units on westward expansion and homesteading, the history of education in America, early mapping of lands, and studies of American cultural developments.

Time period: Late 19th century to early 20th century

See attached Relevant United States History Standards for Grades 5-12

Objectives for students

1) To understand the relationship between U.S. land and homestead policies and the construction of schools and development of communities on the western frontiers.

2) To describe the importance of one-room schools to people in developing rural communities of the American West as both educational facilities and community centers.

3) To compare and contrast the educational experience of rural students in one-room schools with their own educational experiences.

4) To research the history of the oldest school in their community.

Materials for students

The materials listed below either can be used directly on the computer or can be printed out, photocopied, and distributed to students.

1) one map showing the Blakely Township;

2) three readings about the history of the Freeman School, former students' accounts of their experiences at the school, and entries in the school treasurer's account book;

3) five photos of the Freeman School;

4) two paintings of activities at the Freeman School.

Visiting the site

The Freeman School is part of Homestead National Monument of America and is administered by the National Park Service. The monument is located in southeastern Nebraska, 40 miles south of Lincoln, Nebraska and 4 miles west of Beatrice, Nebraska. Follow U.S. Highway 77 to U.S. Highway 136 to Nebraska Highway 4 to reach the monument. The park is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, except January 1, Thanksgiving Day, and December 25. Visitors wanting to enter the Freeman School need to contact the park ahead of time to schedule a visit. For more information, contact the Superintendent, Homestead National Monument of America, 8523 West State Highway 4, Beatrice, Nebraska 68310, or visit the park's Web site at http://www.nps.gov/home/

United States History Standards for Grades 5-12

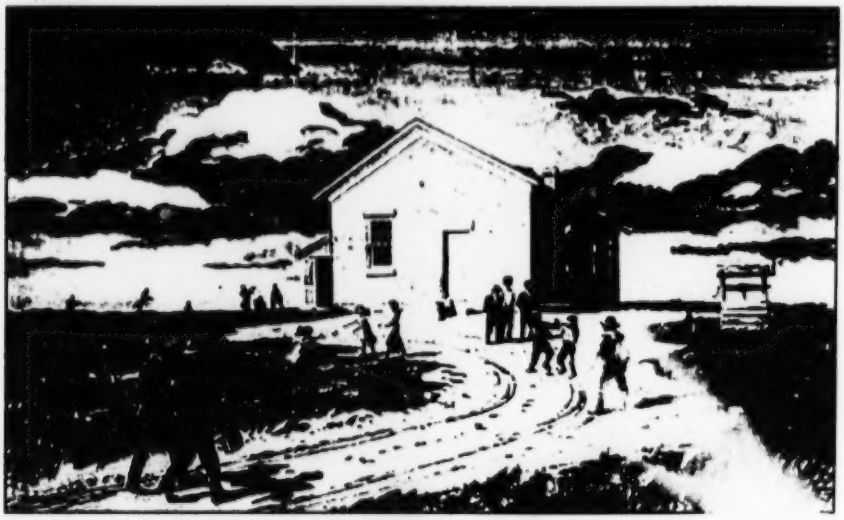
The Freeman School: Building Prairie Communities
relates to the following National Standards for History:

Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)

- Standard 2E– The student understands the settlement of the West.

Getting Started

Inquiry Question



What are the children doing around this building? What purpose might this building serve?

How to Use the Inquiry Question

Begin each lesson by asking students to discuss possible answers to the inquiry question that accompanies the Getting Started image. To facilitate a whole class discussion, you may want to print the page and use it to make an overhead transparency. The purpose of the exercise is to engage students' interest in the lesson's topic by raising questions that can be answered as they complete the lesson.

Rather than serving merely as illustrations for the text, images are documents that play an integral role in helping students achieve the lesson's objectives.

To assist students in learning how to "read" visual materials, you may want to begin this section by having them complete the Photo Analysis Worksheet for one or more of the photos. The worksheet is appropriate for analyzing both historical and modern photographs and will help students develop a valuable skill.

Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1:

Examine the photograph for 10 seconds. How would you describe the photograph?

Step 2:

Divide the photograph into quadrants and study each section individually. What details--such as people, objects, activities--do you notice?

Step 3:

What other information--such as time period, location, season, reason photo was taken--can you gather from the photo?

Step 4:

How would you revise your first description of the photo using the information noted in Steps 2 and 3?

Step 5:

What questions do you have about the photograph? How might you find answers to these questions?

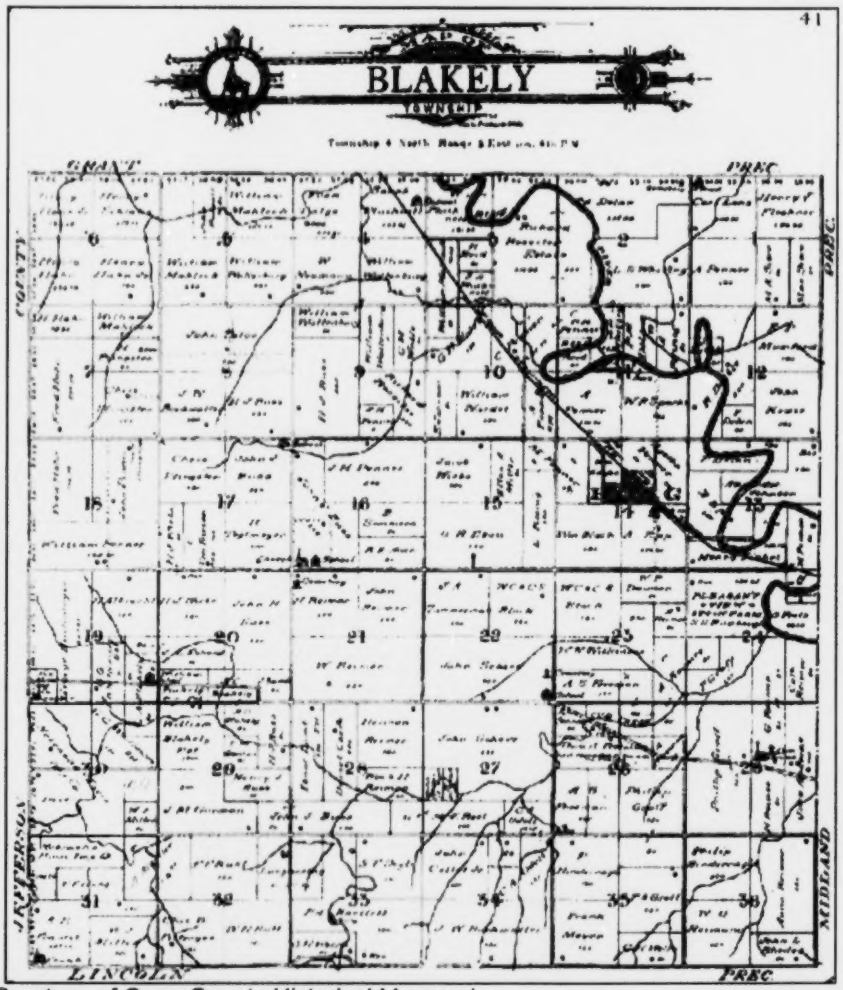
Setting the Stage

As the country expanded west from the Atlantic seaboard, the ideal of an educated citizenry followed the frontier. Shortly after the conclusion of the War for Independence, Congress passed the Land Ordinance of 1785. It provided for the uniform and orderly survey of the western lands into six square mile townships composed of 36 sections a squaremile each. The ordinance recognized the high value Americans placed on education by reserving income from Section 16 in each township for public schools. Throughout the early 19th century, the U.S. Congress continued to attract settlers to the frontier by providing land grants to subsidize public schools. For example, upon the territorial organization of Oregon in 1848, the federal government required all newly established states and territories to provide public schools by allotting the money raised from the sales of lands in Sections 16 and 36 in every township for the support of education.

In 1862, Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, a law that gave individuals 160 acres of land at the end of a five year period provided they lived on the land, built a house, and improved and farmed it. Although individuals did not have to be citizens to claim the land, they did have to be citizens in order to prove up on their claim. On January 1, 1863, Daniel Freeman, who claimed to be a Union soldier on leave from his regiment, filed a claim with the land agent at Brownville, Nebraska. He is recorded in the Brownsville record books as receiving patent No.1 on the first page of the first volume. Freeman may have been the earliest of 30 homestead applicants in land offices across the country to file his claim; however, many other homesteaders followed him.

In 1872, Daniel Freeman and his neighbors in Blakely Township built a red brick school in Section 22 to serve School District Number 21. At that time it closed in 1967, it was the oldest operating school in the state. The Freeman School remains the best example of a one-room school in Nebraska.

Locating the Site
Map 1: Plat map of Blakely Township



(Courtesy of Gage County Historical Museum)

Congress passed the Land Ordinance of 1785 to establish a uniform system for surveying the western lands of the republic. The land was divided into ranges and townships, like a checkerboard. Each six-square mile township had 36 sections. Each section contained 640 acres and was one-mile square. When homesteaders filed a claim, they filed for 160 acres or a quarter of a section in a township. The income from section 16 was reserved for public schools.

Questions for Map 1

1. Locate Beatrice, Nebraska, and Homestead National Monument of America on a state map of Nebraska. Where is the Big Blue River?

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How far is the river from the town of Beatrice? Why might people have wanted to homestead and farm in this area?

2. Locate section 16 on Map 1. Is there a school located in that section?

3. The side of a section is equal to one mile. If children lived in section 1 on Henry Fleshner's property, what is the shortest distance they would have to travel to get to the school in section 16? What would be the daily round-trip distances these students would have to walk?

4. Would it have been practical to locate the township's only school in section 16? What weather conditions might make the distance too difficult or dangerous for children to walk?

5. Locate the other schools in Blakely Township. In what sections are they located? Offer a reason why there are so many schools in Blakely Township.

6. Locate the school in section 22. Name the four landholders closest to the school.

Determining the Facts

Reading 1: The Red Brick School

Just west of Homestead National Monument of America's visitor center, a red brick school stands in the Nebraska prairie. This is the Freeman School, constructed in 1872 to replace a log structure built the year before. The land it stands on measured 18 rods by 13 rods (approximately 1.47 acres). John Scheve either donated or sold the parcel of land to School District 21 to build a school. His adjacent neighbor was Daniel Freeman, the first homesteader in Blakely Township, and perhaps the nation, and upon whose land Homestead National Monument of America is located. Daniel Freeman and his neighbors helped to build the school.

Originally called the "Red Brick School House of School District 21," the school came to be known as the Freeman School. It is unclear if the school is named for homesteader Daniel Freeman or the brick maker, Thomas Freeman. Both men served on the school board of School District 21 and were highly regarded in the local area. The new school building was made of red-orange bricks from the kiln of Thomas Freeman whose land was in the southwest corner of Section 22 and who subsequently served as president of the school board. The overall size of the school is 26 feet by 20 feet. Its 12-inch thick solid brick walls rise from a fieldstone foundation to the height of 12 feet. There is one wood-floored classroom with an adjacent cloakroom inside. The interior brick walls were plastered and whitewashed.

In spite of its remote location, the Freeman School was furnished not only with locally crafted objects, but also desks manufactured in Indiana. The school provided textbooks for its students beginning in 1881, a decade before the state of Nebraska required schools to do so.

Many teachers lived with their students' families to get room and board. Students could be older than the teacher hired by the school board. In the one-room schoolhouse, students' ages did not predict their proficiency level. Some older students were just learning to read while some younger students who had more regular instruction were farther advanced in their studies.

The Freeman School operated from 1872 to 1967, and at the time of its closing was the oldest operating school in Nebraska. Many of the students who attended the Old Red Brick School were proud to have attended it. When students graduated, they carved their graduation date and initials in the bricks on the outside wall of the school. Some dates go back to 1875, while others are as recent as 1948.

The school became the focus of an important court case beginning in 1899. Daniel Freeman, the first homesteader in the township, asked teacher Edith Beecher to stop using the Bible as a textbook. She refused, pointing out that the school board had given her permission to conduct Biblereading, prayer, and hymns at the school. Freeman appealed to the school board to stop the ten-minute exercises, but the school board denied his request. Freeman then sued the school district in Gage County District Court. Defeated in that court he appealed to the Nebraska Supreme Court. The case of *Daniel Freeman v. John Scheve, et. al.* (John Scheve was officer of the school board at the time) was decided in 1902. The court ruled in favor of Daniel Freeman, agreeing that the religious instruction violated the separation of church and state provided for by Nebraska's state constitution. This suit set a precedent for later court cases involving the separation of church and state.

The Freeman School survives as the best example of a one-room school in Nebraska, in part because of restoration and rehabilitation. The National Park Service decided to save the school for future generations because of its important role in the development of this country. Between 1973 and 1975, the National Park Service restored the school to its pre1900 appearance. Restoration means returning a building to its form at a particular date as nearly as possible; authenticity often requires the removal of "non-period" elements. Some of the work done on the school included repointing the bricks (fixing and repairing the outer, visible finish of mortar between the bricks and stones of a masonry wall), rebuilding the chimney, bracing the foundation, pulling up the later floor to get to the original wooden floor, white washing the walls, and rebuilding the teacher's platform. Many people worked to restore the school. Some of these people were historians, architects, painters, masons, carpenters, and contractors. On the grounds of the school today are a one-story shed, separate privies or outhouses for girls and boys, and a water pump. Next to the school on the northern and western sides, is one acre of native tallgrass prairie.

Rehabilitation, the restoration of a building to a use that is similar to its historic use or does not conflict with the historic appearance of that building, has been accomplished in several ways at the Freeman School. Local school children visit the school and imagine the frontier past. They learn about frontier education and the importance of oneroom schools. School groups can also arrange to hold classes for a day in the historic Freeman School classroom.

Questions for Reading 1

1. How long did the Freeman School operate as a school?

2. There are many dates and initials carved into the brick of the school. Why would students carve their initials and graduation year in the bricks? Why would it be harmful for people today to carve or

mark on these bricks? What is the difference between historic carvings and graffiti?

3. Quite a bit of restoration work was done on the Freeman School. What types of job skills did the people have who assisted in restoring the Freeman School?

4. Why would the National Park Service spend money to restore the Old Brick School to the way it looked before 1900? What is the school's function now?

Reading 1 was adapted from David Arbogast, Thomas Busch, and Richard Ortega, "Freeman Homestead and Freeman School" (Gage County, Nebraska), National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1975; the National Park Service's visitor's guide and Web site for Homestead National Monument of America, and other historical documents in the collection of Homestead National Monument of America.

Determining the Facts

Reading 2: The Community's Experience

Following are excerpts from taped interviews conducted by Park Rangers during a special event held at the Freeman School in 1973.

Excerpted interview with Mr. Louis Esau, pupil at the Freeman School from 1907 to 1915:

The teachers taught us the usual, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and physiology. You got one 15 minute recess in the morning and one in the afternoon. You would work at your desk until the teacher called you up to the front for recitation time.

Every year at Christmas, there was a program for the community at the school. I went to the box socials at the school. You know how box socials are. The ladies decorate a pretty box and the men buy it. Sometimes competition got pretty stiff, especially if a certain guy wanted a certain girl then the price got up pretty high. Occasionally if two guys wanted the same lady's box, they would bid up high.

Excerpted interview with Mr. William Clifford:

Our children went to the Freeman School in the later years. I often visited with the old timers that went to school at Freeman before 1900. The school was used as a meeting place for all community affairs in the 1870s until it closed in 1968 due to the consolidation of the school district. Originally, church services were held there. I know the granddaughter whose grandparents were married in the school. Church services, community gatherings, political meetings, caucuses, elections, box socials, and probably dances were held there.

The bricks were done by Thomas Freeman on his farm. His place was a quarter mile west of the school. The kiln was just west of the present building. The kiln is no longer there. They dug the well first and put the pump on it later. This was to make sure there was water in the area. The well pump would have been done in the later years. There was a row of steel posts with rings on them along the east side of the school. That was for hitching horses.

I do not know anything that causes more tension in a community than the school business. That is everybody's business. They had considerable tension on the elections, at times down there at the school. Some elections they would not even let the voters in, and they would hand the ballots out the window. There was a group that was trying to stuff the ballot box. The children had a holiday on election day.

There were two terms of school that were worked around the crops. Immigrants went to the school, Mennonites, Lutherans, Germans, and others. The school was remodeled. The floor was redone in the 1920s and again in 51 or 52. They still used some of the original desks.

Excerpted interview with William Scheve, landowner and grandson of John Scheve:

My grandfather gave the land for the school. The deed was finally transferred in 1891, but he gave the land in 1871. They just did not get around to officially transferring until then. I guess they did not feel it was important.

The first school in the area was in 1868 in a local farm house. Several different families attended the school. The teacher for the school boarded in the area. They had programs. People sat out in the desks and the program was on the platform where the teacher's desk was.

It has always been a community center. That is what I remember best about the school. Always a center for elections, farmers' meetings place, township meetings. They were all conducted there. Both the Republican and the Democratic caucuses were held there. It was used as a church between 1870 and 1875. The cemetery is up on the hill to the north. Some of the graves sites up there have people buried there who were born in the 18th century.

Since we lived where we looked down on the school, we saw a lot of what went on. It was a gathering place for years for the different farm organizations. In later years, the Farmer's Union used to have their monthly meetings down there. The school teacher would have box socials at night to raise money for the school. There would be one or two of those a year. I forget what these proceeds would go for, but you would buy these boxes that the girls would fix. You would bid on them and paid $6 to $7. That was high, usually $1 to $1.50. Everybody looked forward to the box socials.

Election Day was a vacation day for the school children. The school house was turned over to the election board for elections until 1968.

Questions for Reading 2

1. According to William Scheve, how did the school district get the land for the Freeman School? Why do you think it took so long to transfer the ownership of the land to School District #21?

2. Historians are not certain whether the land upon which the school was built was donated by John Scheve or purchased from him. Some sources have been lost over time while there is a conflict between some written sources and the Scheve family's oral

tradition. What might account for the conflict between the surviving sources about how the land for Freeman School was acquired? What types of written records might historians normally look for to find out about the transfer or sale of a parcel of land?

3. What kind of center did Mr. Scheve call the school? What evidence did he and the other people interviewed about the school offer to supports this statement?

4. What is meant by the statement, "school business is everyone's business"? Why would Mr. Clifford say that tensions ran high at the school? What evidence supports his statement?

5. What activities do the people being interviewed remember? Classify the activities as educational, religious, occupational, political, or social. Which activities were the most numerous?

6. How important was the one-room Freeman School to its neighbors in Gage County, Nebraska?

Reading 3: The Treasurer's Account Book

The following information is taken from the Treasurer's Account Book For School District No. 21 Gage County, Nebraska, one of the items in the Museum Collection of Homestead National Monument of America. On the inside cover of the account book is written "Commencing on the first Monday in April 1871 Philip Gascoigne, Treasurer." All the records below are the receipts or amounts of money paid to the treasurer for the Freeman School. Entries marked "state apportionment" reflect that, in the early 1900s, the state of Nebraska began to apportion (provide tax money) to the school districts to help with supplies and other expenses.

Receipts for year ending April 5, 1875

Received from all sources	$873.44
Balance on hand April 6, 1874	2.60
Total Amount received during year	876.04

Receipts for the School Year from June 24, 1895 to June 29, 1896

June 24	Balance on hand	118.77
Dec 18	For the use of School house by the county	10.00
Jan 7	Township Treasurer for use of schoolhouse	21.50
April 7	County Treasurer	105.00
	Total Receipts	395.27

Rec. for school year from June 29, 1896 to June 28, 1897

June 29	Balance on hand	27.38
Nov 6	Treasurer of Gage County	100.00
Jan 21	Rec'd from D. Freeman from Township for Election	5.00
Feb 5	County Treasurer	149.00
	Total Receipts	281.38

1916-1917

June 12	Balance on hand	240.00
June 22	Received from County Treas	800.00
Nov 21	Rec'd from Primary Election in School	7.50
Feb 5	house	
	Rec'd from County Treasurer for use of	7.50

	school house of general Election	1055.23
	Total Receipts	

1918-1919

Jan 10	Balance on hand	192.47
Jan 10	in Bank on Deposit	600.00
Dec 14	From County Treasurer	610.00
May 23	From Miss Dennnehy Receipt of Box	32.50
	Supper	1434.97
	Total Receipts	

1928-1929

	Balance on Hand	479.31
Aug 14	State Apportionment	68.08
Nov 23	From County Treasurer	1000.00
Dec 4	Election Room Rent Received	10.00
Jan 23	F. Maramille Township Meeting	5.00
July 15	Primary Election	10.00
Feb 8	State Apportionment	57.53
	Total Receipts	1629.92

Receipts for 1939-1940

	Balance on Hand	134.23
Aug 21	State Apportionment	54.95
Nov 28	County Treasurer	300.00
Mar 23	State Apportionment	43.14
April 16	County Treasurer	300.00
May 7	Farmers Union Electric Light Meeting	5.00
May 7	County Treasurer Election Room Rent	5.00
May 30	Helen Albrecht Balance of 1st Prize	13.80
	Total Receipts	856.12

Receipts for 1942-1943

June	Balance on Hand	190.30
Oct 3	AAA Rent for school room	1.00
Nov 28	State Apportionment	53.71
Nov 28	Election Room Rent - August	5.00
	Election Room Rent - Nov	5.00
Jan 27	Received from County Treasurer	300.00
April 17	Received from County Treasurer	300.00

April 17	State Apportionment	28.01
April 17	Rent from Farmers Union Meetings	5.00
May 6	Received $3 from poultry meeting fund	3.00
May 6	Farmer Union Do for Rent Room	10.00
	Total Receipts for year	901.02

Questions for Reading 3

1. Based on the income and receipts recorded in the Treasurers' book, where did the Freeman School get its money?

2. Based on the memories of people interviewed in Reading 2, what might be meant by "received from all sources" in the receipts for 1875? What might be meant by the 1919 entry, "From Miss Dennehy Receipt of Box Supper"?

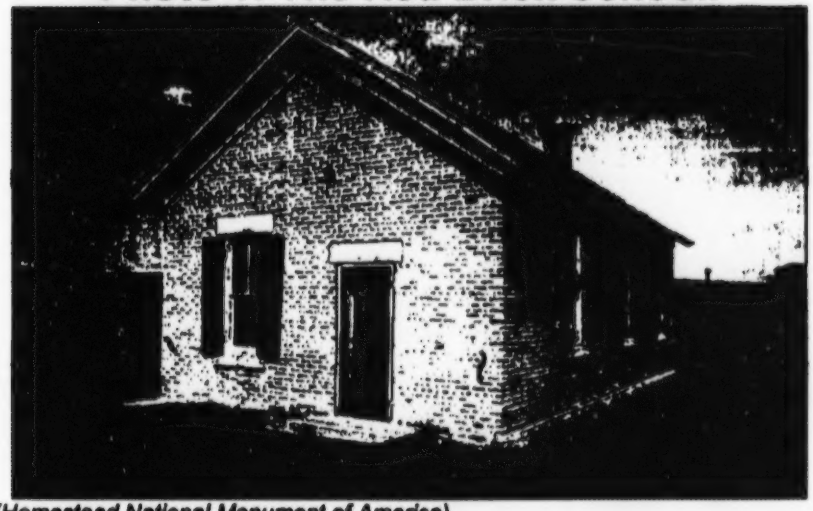
3. Although expenses are not listed, what expenses would the school have needed to pay for?

4. Create a time line for the activities at the school using the account book. What kinds of activities were held at the school? What activities seem to have been held on a yearly or monthly basis?

5. Does the treasurer's account book support or contradict Mr. Scheves' statement in Reading 2 that the Freeman School, "has always been a community center"?

Visual Evidence

Photo 1: The Red Brick School.



(Homestead National Monument of America)

This photograph was taken in 1978, over a decade after the last students attended the school in 1967. The Freeman School, now operated by Homestead National Monument of America, appears today as it did in 1978.

Questions for Photo 1

1. What kind of material was used to build this building?

2. Is there anything notable about the front window and doorway?

3. Is there anything visible from the exterior of this building to suggest that it once was a school?

4. How many classrooms were in this building?

Visual Evidence

Photo 2: Teacher and Pupils, 1914.

(Homestead National Monument of America)

Photographs were taken of the Freeman School in the early 1900s. Many of the early photographs have never been recovered. However, the surviving photographs provide important visual information that can help people determine the types of activities that took place at the Freeman School and what the school looked like in its early years.

Questions for Photo 2

1. What age does the youngest student appear to be? What age does the oldest student appear to be? What challenges might this have created for the teacher?

2. Do you think all the students studied the same thing at the same time? Why or why not?

Visual Evidence

Photo 3: Children in front of the school, 1913.

(Homestead National Monument of America)

Questions for Photo 3

1. Compare the appearance of the school in Photo 3 with its appearance in Photo 1. How is it different? How is it similar? Offer some suggestions why this might be.

2. Look at Photos 2 and 3 of the Freeman School as it appeared in the early 1900s. What kinds of activities appear to be going on in each of these photographs? Do all the people in the photographs seem to be teachers and students? Who might the other adults be in the photographs? Why might they be at the school?

Visual Evidence

Photo 4: Interior of the school.

(Homestead National Monument of America)

The school has been refurbished to reflect a classroom from the late 1800s or early 1900s.

Questions for Photo 4

1. What objects do you see in the interior of the school?

2. How is this classroom different from your own classroom?

3. Look at the school desks. Imagine yourself sitting in one. What do you think lessons in this building would be like? What similarities do you think there would be in the way teachers and students interact today? What differences do you think there would be in the way they relate to each other?

4. How might the community use the interior of the school? Are there any clues in this picture?

Visual Evidence

Painting 1: Children at Play. Painted by George Marsden.

(Homestead National Monument of America)

In the 1970s, Homestead National Monument of America obtained two paintings of the Freeman School by George Marsden. These paintings depict scenes at the school.

Questions for Painting 1

1. Study Painting 1. What time of day is it at the Freeman School? List the evidence and activities that support your answer.

2. In what kinds of activities did the students of the Freeman School participate, according to George Marsden's painting? How are these activities similar to activities that take place at your school? How are they different?

3. Note the depicted surroundings of the school. How are they different from your school? Name and explain the use of some of the objects/buildings in the painting that you no longer see in many schools today.

Visual Evidence

Painting 2: Evening at the Freeman School. Painted by George Marsden.

(Homestead National Monument of America)

Questions for Painting 2

1. Study Painting 2 closely. What time of day is it in this scene?

2. Why might there be a light on in the school? What do the buckboards and buggies next to the school suggest? What might be going on at the school?

3. What activities go on at your school in the evenings or weekends?

Putting It All Together

The following activities engage students in learning about the role of schools and education in communities past and present. Students will have the opportunity to compare their own school experiences with those of students in the Freeman School in Nebraska.

Activity 1: And Today In School....

Many teachers in one-room schools kept records or journals of what went on at the school in which they taught. These journals of record, as they were called, documented the happenings in the classroom and the after-hours activities at the schools. Some teachers wrote every day in their journals while other teachers wrote once every week or two. Teachers were the keepers of the school and responsible to the county superintendent of schools. Eventually many of these journals became excellent primary sources of information about the one-room schools. Unfortunately, the Freeman School records were destroyed in the late 1960s when the school closed.

Explain to students that they will be assuming the role of a teacher at the Freeman School and recreating one month of journal entries. Students will be responsible for writing four entries, one for each week of the month they choose. They may choose from one of the three time periods: 1870-1890, 1890-1910, or 1910-1930. Remind students to reexamine the readings, photographs, and paintings from this lesson for details they may want to include along with their textbooks for the national context. Journal entries should include daily school attendance, subjects taught, and other events that took place at the school. Some difficulties teachers might have faced would include inclement weather, maintenance problems with the building, supply shortages, illnesses, student discipline, or curriculum disagreements with parents or school board members. The journal may take note of after-hours activities and special events held at the school.

After the students have completed the journals, divide the class into groups of 4-5 students. Ask them to share their journal entries with each other about what happened at their school for the month. Other role-playing activities might be from different points of view (a student or school board member) or presented in a different manner (an illustration such as George Marsden's painting or a skit).

Activity 2: To Preserve or Not to Preserve

Divide the class into groups with 6-8 students in each group. They will be role-playing a citizens' group who has just bought (or been given) 5 acres of land on which the abandoned but historic Freeman School is located. Each citizens' group will need to decide for their community what to do with this building. Assign students to play one of the following roles:

A. Members who want to preserve the school in some form or other
1. A farmer whose family helped to build the historic school
2. A former student of the historic school

B. Members who want to see the historic school torn down to make room for their project
1. A business person who thinks the land would be a perfect spot for a new business
2. A land developer who thinks the land is perfect for building a new subdivision

C. Members who are neutral
The remaining committee members are undecided about what to do with the school and have no feeling one way or the other about its fate.

The students playing members who have a strong position (either for or against) will try to persuade the undecided committee members to vote for their solution. Ask students to discuss the following questions in making their decision:

1. If they tear it down, what will they do with the land? How does it benefit the community? Does it benefit all members of the community or only some members? What costs (economic and cultural) come with a decision to tear it down?

2. If they keep the school, what should they do with the building? Should it be redone to an early appearance or left as it is? If they decide on a restoration, how will they pay for it? Where will the skilled workers come from to carry out a restoration? What kind of activities should the group allow at the site?

The whole group will need to vote on the question: Should they tear down the building or keep it? Each member should justify his or her decision about the future of the building and the land. When they have finished, have the groups share what they chose to do with the rest of the class.

Activity 3: How Did My Town Grow?

Ask students to find out which school in their city or county is the oldest and then conduct research to recreate the history of this school (or alternately about the school they are attending.) School historical information may be found through the district superintendent of schools, the local library, a local historical society or museum, community newspapers, or interviews with former students or teachers. Information the students should try to locate should include:

1. What other buildings were located around the school?

2. Was the school the first building in the area? Sometimes, communities sprung up around early one-room or first schools in an area. Was this the case with their community's school?

3. What types of activities took place at the school, both educational and community?

4. Has the building been changed, replaced, or demolished? If there are early pictures or floor plans, describe the changes. Why might these changes have happened?

Then ask students to share their findings, through oral, written, display, or computer slide-show presentations. Contact the school district's records managers to see if they would like to attend the student presentations, possibly for the purposes of adding the student research to the district's collection.

The Freeman School: Building Prairie Communities-- Supplementary Resources

By looking at *The Freeman School: Building Prairie Communities*, students will learn about life in a school and community on the Great Plains during the settlement of the American West. Those interested in learning more will find that the Internet offers a variety of interesting materials.

Homestead National Monument of America http://www.nps.gov/home/
The Freeman School is administered by Homestead National Monument of America, a unit of the National Park System. The park's Web pages provide excellent information on the ecology of the prairie, the Homestead Act of 1862, Freeman family information, and a virtual tour of the Freeman School.

National Archives http://www.nara.gov/
The Archives has placed on its web site a number of items about Western Expansion, including copies of the original Homestead Act and original maps of western areas that were being settled. To find them, visit the NAIL Digital Copies search engine and enter "Homestead Act."

Library of Congress: The Northern Great Plains, 1880-1920
http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/award97/ndfahtml/ngphome.html
The Northern Great Plains, 1880-1920 exhibit includes a series of photographs of life on the Northern Great Plains between 1880 and 1920 that sets the physical and historical context for western settlers in this region. One section is dedicated to Schooling: Education on the Frontier.

National Register of Historic Places: Teaching with Historic Places
http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/58iron/58iron.htm
Explore the Teaching with Historic Places lesson plan, Iron Hill School: An African American One-Room School, that focuses on one of 80 schools built between 1919 and 1928 for African American children in Delaware by philanthropist Pierre Samuel du Pont as part of his "Delaware experiment" to reform the state's educational system.

Coles County One-Room Schools, 1828-1986
http://www.colescounty.net/schools.html
Coles County, Illinois maintains a Web page that details the history of the one-room schools in their county. Plat maps and historical photographs show the extent of the system in an earlier frontier area. The site includes an informative history of one-room schools and a bibliography of resources.

Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University

http://www.lib.cmich.edu/clarke/schoolsintro.htm

The Clark Historical Library's Web pages include the on-line exhibit One Room Schools: Michigan's Educational Legacy. Featured sections of the exhibit include accounts by teachers and students, descriptions of activities at school, a bibliography of textbooks used by students, and architectural information.

Library of Congress: The American Memory Collection

http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/mdbquery.html

Library of Congress The American Memory collection offers a wide variety of resources about the history of one-room schools, including photographs and oral histories of people who attended them. Start with the search engine, being sure to choose "Match this exact phrase" before you enter "one room school."

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

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